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**STATE OF CALIFORNIA - THE RESOURCES AGENCY**

Arnold Schwarzenegger, *Governor*  
CALIFORNIA TAHOE CONSERVANCY  
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This notice is being issued jointly by the California Tahoe Conservancy and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and meets CEQA and TRPA noticing requirements for a Notice of Preparation.

## NOTICE OF PREPARATION

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**To:** California State Clearinghouse  
Nevada State Clearinghouse  
Cooperating Agencies  
Responsible and Trustee Agencies  
Interested Parties and Organizations

**Subject:** Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the South Tahoe Greenway Multi-Use Trail Project, South Lake Tahoe, California.

**Lead Agencies:****State of California****California Tahoe Conservancy**

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**United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service,  
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit**

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NOTE: The USFS has prepared a separate notice that meets NEPA requirements for a Notice of Intent (NOI) for publication in the *Federal Register*.

**Project Title:** South Tahoe Greenway Multi-Use Trail Project

## **Summary**

**Project Description:** The South Tahoe Greenway Multi-Use Trail is a California Tahoe Conservancy (Conservancy) proposed Class I or better trail that will link Meyers, California to Stateline, Nevada, generally following the former Caltrans U.S. Highway 50 Bypass Corridor. The trail will form the backbone of the bike trail network in South Lake Tahoe and link residential and lodging uses to jobs, schools, shopping, and recreation and community areas. The trail implements specific goals and policies of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), the USDA Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (USFS), and Conservancy to provide a non-motorized alternative transportation corridor through South Lake Tahoe. Trail development details will comply with American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and ADA design standards and will include informal trail consolidation, disturbed land restoration, and forest health improvement along its length.

**Project Location:** The proposed trail is located in El Dorado County, CA and will connect Meyers, California (near the intersection of U.S. Highway 50 and Pioneer Trail) to Stateline, Nevada (near the proposed Van Sickle Bi-State Park) (see Figures 1 and 2).

The Conservancy is planning to construct the South Tahoe Greenway Multi-Use Project. The Conservancy, USDA Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (USFS), and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) are preparing a joint EIR/EIS/EIS to inform agency decision makers about the potential environmental effects of the project. This joint document will serve as an EIR prepared by the Conservancy pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); an EIS prepared by the USFS pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); and an EIS prepared by TRPA pursuant to its regulations. This notice meets the CEQA and TRPA noticing requirements for a Notice of Preparation (NOP). The purpose of this NOP is to inform agencies and the general public that this environmental document is being prepared for this project and to invite specific comments on its scope and content.

We would like to know the views of interested persons, organizations, and agencies as to the scope and content of the information to be included and analyzed in the EIR/EIS/EIS. Agencies should comment on the elements of the environmental information that are relevant to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed alternatives. The project description, location, alternatives to be evaluated in the EIR/EIS/EIS, and potential environmental effects of the proposed alternatives (to the extent known) are contained in this NOP.

Responses should be sent by **December 14, 2006** to the Conservancy contact person and address below. If you represent a public agency, private firm or other entity, please indicate a contact person on your response. Duplicate responses to the other lead agencies are not required.

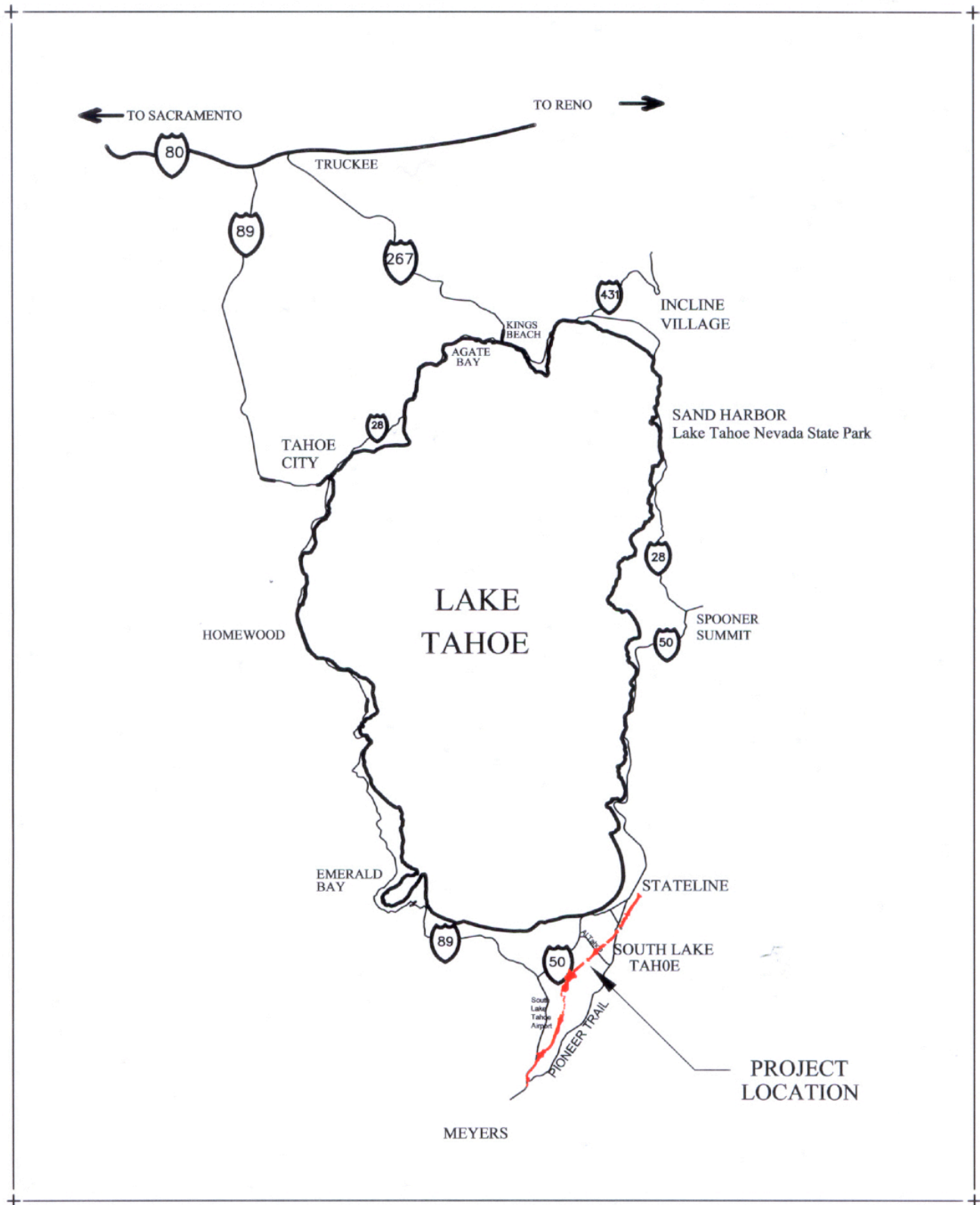
**California Tahoe Conservancy**  
Ray Lacey, Program Coordinator  
1061 Third Street  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150  
rlacey@tahoecons.ca.gov

In addition to your opportunity to submit written comments, public scoping meetings are being conducted to provide you with the opportunity to learn more about the proposed action and to express oral comments about the content of the EIR/EIS/EIS. The scoping meetings will be held at the following times and locations:

**Tuesday, November 14, 2006**  
**6:30 to 8:30 PM**  
Conservancy Public Information Workshop  
USDA Forest Service Supervisor's Office  
35 College Drive  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

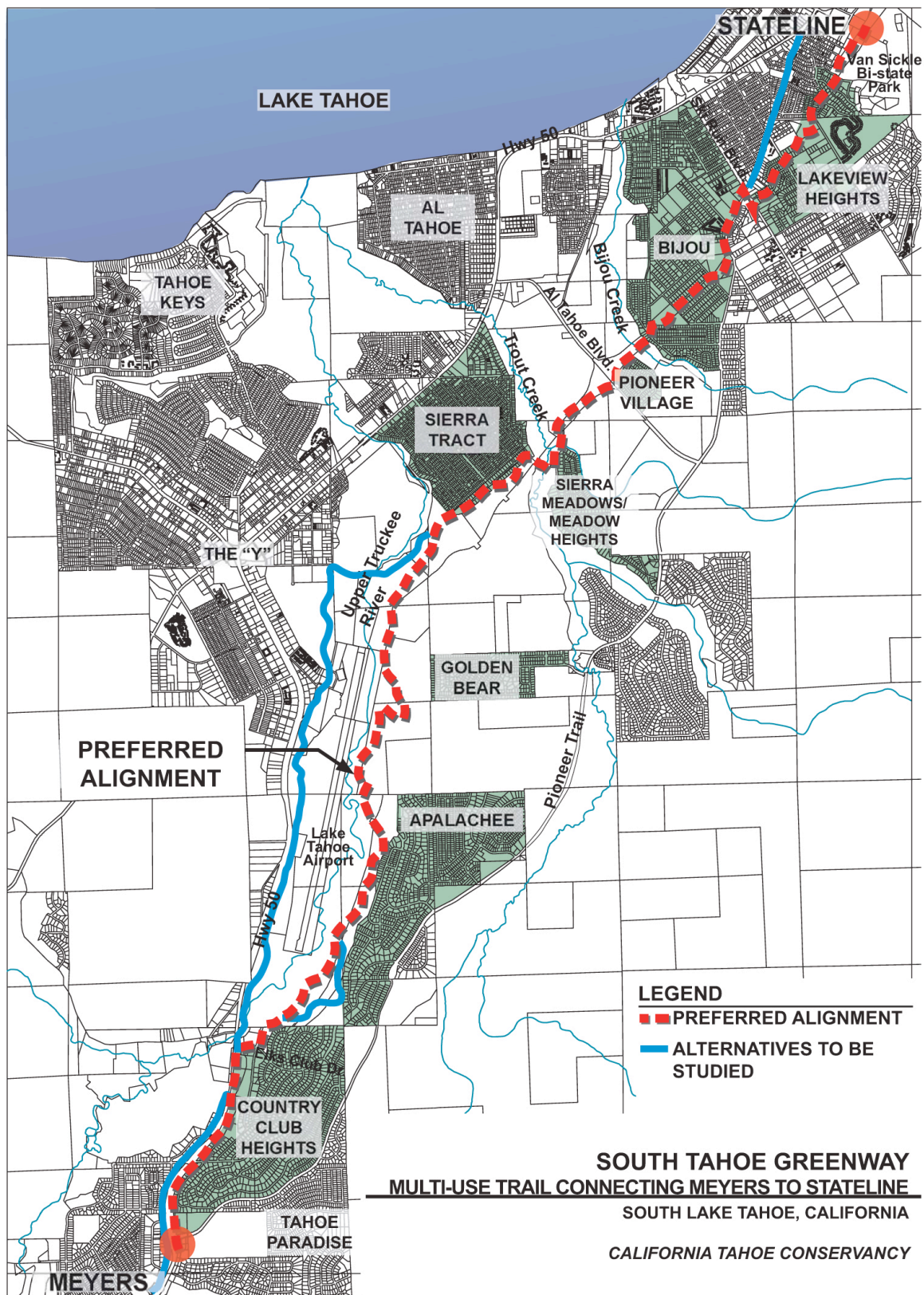
**Tuesday, November 28, 2006**  
**Meeting Begins at 9:00 AM**  
City of South Lake Tahoe Council Meeting  
City Council Chambers  
1901 Airport Road  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

**Thursday, December 14, 2006**  
**Meeting Begins at 2:00 PM**  
TRPA Hearings Officer Meeting  
TRPA Governing Board Room  
128 Market Street  
Stateline, NV 89449



Project Location Map

Figure 1



Trail Alignment

Figure 2

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Conservancy is pursuing a multi-use trail project along the former U.S. Highway 50 Bypass corridor that extends from the intersection of U.S. Highway 50 and Pioneer Trail northeast to the site of the proposed Van Sickle Bi-State Park in Stateline, NV. Caltrans originally obtained right-of-way for this bypass freeway in the 1960's and 1970's. By the 1980's increased environmental sensitivity led Caltrans to recommend rescinding the freeway designation. The corridor, however, continues to have high value for alternative transportation as it remains an intact, publicly owned route. TRPA affirmed this in 1987 with adoption of the Regional Goals and Policies Plan that included a future Class I bike trail in the ROW. The 2001 Environmental Improvement Program, 2004 Regional Transportation Plan/Air Quality Plan, and 2005 Lake Tahoe Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan also continued this emphasis.

In December 2000 Caltrans transferred property ownership of most of the right-of-way lands to the Conservancy and feasibility examination for a multi-use trail began. Two years later, the Conservancy Board considered the Former Highway 50 Bypass Bike Trail Project Feasibility Report and approved continued consideration of the right-of-way lands for development of a multi-use trail facility. Project development from that point included data collection on a wide variety of natural resource and public use topics. The project team presented preliminary plans at two public workshops held in September and November 2003. Coordination with local and regional agencies occurred through data sharing, multiple individual meetings, and formal Steering Committee meetings held in October 2003, November 2005 and August 2006. These efforts have resulted in the proposed project and alternatives described in this document.

## PURPOSE AND NEED

**Purpose:** Complete an accessible and continuous multi-use trail from the existing Class I trail in Meyers, California to Stateline, Nevada that establishes a convenient non-auto transportation alternative and high quality recreational experience for residents and visitors.

**Need:** The South Shore roadway network suffers from excessive traffic congestion and the resulting degradation of air quality. The South Shore also lacks continuous Class I facilities for bicycles and pedestrians that provide high quality recreational opportunities. The TRPA Regional Transportation Plan/ Air Quality Plan identifies the unconstructed State Route 50 right-of-way as an opportunity for development of a portion of the bicycle and pedestrian network to reduce dependency on private autos and improve air quality.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following basic objectives of the project were developed for the proposed action to meet the purpose and need:

- Objective 1. Plan and construct the principal element of the South Shore bicycle network referenced in the TRPA Goals and Policies Plan, Transportation Goal 4.G: “The unconstructed Route 50 right-of-way remains an integral component of the overall transportation system in the South Shore by providing commuting and recreational bicycle options which will maximize the functions of the highway network.”
- Objective 2. Create a successful transportation alternative for non-motorized travel that provides an efficient and safe route and an attractive and high quality user experience.
- Objective 3. Create a convenient, Class I or better trail that connects residential neighborhoods, lodging areas and community and recreational destinations.
- Objective 4. Serve a broad spectrum of users by meeting American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and ADA design standards.
- Objective 5. Incorporate environmental restoration activities on parcels the trail traverses to address forest health, drainage and water quality and stream environment zone concerns.

## DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The South Tahoe Greenway Multi-Use Trail is a Class I or better trail linking Meyers, California to Stateline, Nevada, generally following the former Caltrans U.S, Highway 50 Bypass Corridor. The trail will form the backbone of the bike trail network in South Lake Tahoe and link residential and lodging uses to jobs, schools, shopping, and recreation and community areas. Details of the proposed trail include:

- Trail Design Standards. The trail will comply with AASHTO and ADA standards. This includes: 10-foot-wide paved path, 2-foot-wide clear shoulders on either side, a minimum of 5 feet of separation between the path and other travel routes or obstacles such as ditches, and maintaining a maximum 5% grade with limited exceptions.
- Trail Crossings. The trail will cross stream environment zones and Trout Creek on raised platforms or bridges to maintain hydrologic connections. The trail will also cross streets, minimizing such crossings if possible and crossing at intersections or safe mid-block locations where necessary. Signage and flashing



lights will be used at crossings such as Glenwood Dr., Al Tahoe Blvd., and Pioneer Trail to increase safety.

- **Trail Connections.** The trail will connect residential neighborhoods (e.g., Country Club Heights, the Elks Club area, Apalachee, Golden Bear, Sierra Tract, Pioneer Village, Bijou, the Ski Run area, and neighborhoods along David Lane and Rocky Point), existing and proposed bike trails, schools (e.g., Lake Tahoe Community College), employment centers (e.g., Ski Run, Heavenly, Casino core), recreation areas (e.g., El Dorado County playfields, Bijou Community Park), and transit centers (e.g., Heavenly transit center, 15 Blue Go bus stops).
- **Restoration Along the Trail Route.** The project will also include opportunities for restoration, including SEZ restoration in the Upper Truckee River Meadow area, closure of informal way trails through the alignment, storm water treatment along highways, and improved hydrologic connectivity of the Trout Creek meadow at the Martin Avenue Bridge.
- **Fuels Reduction Along the Trail Route.** The trail will pass through several forested areas (e.g., Sunset Stables project area and the Van Sickle Bi-state Park). Forest thinning for fuels reduction will occur within a minimum of 150 feet from the trail centerline to allow the trail to serve as a fire break.
- **View Opportunities.** Designated viewing areas will be provided along the trail corridor (e.g., at the Upper Truckee River and Trout Creek) to discourage people from exiting the trail and creating additional informal access points to these destinations.
- **Signage.** Signage will be provided to direct users to appropriate neighborhood access points and connector trails, to identify interpretive opportunities, and to inform users of appropriate trail behavior.
- **Trailhead Facilities.** New trailhead facilities are not planned as part of the Greenway project. Existing and proposed parking areas that may be used as trailheads include the planned Van Sickle Bi-State Park, Heavenly Village, Casinos, El Dorado County Play Fields, Elks Club Lodge, and the end of Thunderbird Drive.
- **Management/Maintenance.** The proposed project will include design features to minimize management and maintenance requirements. User control features will direct users to appropriate viewpoints and connector trails to minimize the creation of informal way-trails. The following items are assumed for environmental review purposes: 1) the proposed project will be designed to allow snow removal for year-round bicycle and pedestrian use, yet will not assume the management structure to do so; 2) the project will be suited as a cross-country ski trail, yet will not assume the management structure necessary for



setting ski tracks; and 3) the Greenway trail will be an AASHTO Shared Use facility and as such will allow no unauthorized motorized access (vehicles or snowmobiles).

## ALTERNATIVES

- Use of the new El Dorado County Sawmill Trail (located west of U.S. Highway 50) from Meyers to the intersection of Meadowvale or Elks Club and U.S. Highway 50;
- Follow the US Highway 50 corridor from Pioneer Trail to near Kyburz Avenue, bending around the north side of the Lake Tahoe Airport and crossing back east toward the South Tahoe Greenway Multi-Use trail corridor through Barton Meadow and over the Upper Truckee River on private property (note: this alternative would eliminate the portion of the South Tahoe Greenway Multi-Use Trail corridor that would travel through the Sunset Stables property located south and east of the Lake Tahoe Airport);
- Use of alternative trail design measures (e.g., boardwalks, bridges, porous paving materials) to reduce or eliminate effects to sensitive resources;
- Use of Pioneer Trail right of way from Ski Run Boulevard to the trail's terminus at U.S. Highway 50; and
- Maximize use of the former U.S. Highway 50 bypass right-of-way in the Sunset Stables project area located east of the Lake Tahoe Airport by locating the trail in the eastern-most forested area of the Sunset Stables project and at a higher elevation to allow for greater flexibility during future Conservancy design of the Sunset Stables river restoration project.

## PROJECT TRAIL CORRIDOR CHARACTERISTICS

### Property Ownership

- The majority (6 miles) of the 9.6 mile trail follows the Former Highway 50 Bypass corridor. Where the trail leaves the Bypass corridor, it will remain within close proximity. ***Refer to the proposed Trail mapping in Attachment A.***
- The majority (6.8 miles) of the trail will be within Conservancy property ownership.
- The trail will also cross 0.86 mile of USFS parcels, 0.36 mile of City parcels, 0.42 mile of Joint Powers Authority parcels, and 0.36 mile of Caltrans parcels/right-of-way.
- The trail will also cross the privately-owned Mosher/Ledbetter parcel east of the airport.

#### Land Capability and Existing Land Coverage (e.g., trails and roads)

- The 9.6 mile trail will cross high capability land for approximately 6.3 miles and will utilize existing disturbed areas where possible.
- In SEZ areas, the trail will follow existing trail or roadway disturbance for approximately 1.5 miles.
- TRPA land capability verification has identified 260,000 square feet of existing SEZ land coverage in the right-of-way that includes Conservancy, USFS, and City-owned parcels. Existing SEZ coverage includes existing maintenance roads, old highway 50, and single-track trails. A primary feature of this project will be to consolidate existing use onto the Greenway, allowing restoration of existing SEZ disturbance.
- The trail will be partially located within the Sunset Stables project area (located south and east of the Lake Tahoe Airport adjacent to the Upper Truckee River).
- The trail will also cross the Trout Creek and Bijou Creek drainages.

#### Land Uses (TRPA Plan Areas, USFS Management Areas, etc.)

- Land use classifications include 4.6 miles within recreation/conservation Plan Areas and the remaining in residential or community plan areas (Al Tahoe and Stateline/Ski Run).
- Removal of large trees (greater than 30" dbh) will not be permitted in the recreation/conservation plan areas unless required by public safety concerns.
- The trail will cross the USFS Tahoe Valley Management Area, including lands designated as prescription 10 (Timber Stand Management) and 11 (Reduced Timber).

## POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The following subject areas include potential environmental effects associated with the range of alternatives identified above. These issues will be explored further during project scoping and during preparation of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS:

**Land Use.** Land use impacts to be addressed include changes to onsite uses, land use compatibility, and community character. The EIR/EIS/EIS will also address consistency with TRPA plan area statement (PAS) requirements (Plan Areas 80, 85, 94, 101, 100, 105, 95, 119, 120 and 123).

**Hydrology and Water Quality.** Trail construction and restoration of informal trails in the trail corridor could create short-term increases in sediment load during the construction period. The trail will cross several drainage ways and stream environment zones that are connected to the Upper Truckee River, as well as the Trout Creek and Bijou Creek stream zones. The trail crossings could effect hydrologic function/connection within these drainage ways and stream environment zones. Best Management Practices and mitigation measures will be developed to address the potential short- and long-term impacts to hydrology and water quality. The EIR/EIS/EIS will also address long-term water quality monitoring needs.

**Biological Resources (Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Vegetation and Wildlife).** Trail construction and use of the trail would affect the distribution, extent, and quality of sensitive and common biological resources on the project site. The trail corridor will cross a mapped, deer migration corridor that is located east of the Lake Tahoe Airport; approximately 1.0 mile of potential Yellow Warbler habitat west of the Apalachee development; approximately 2.6 miles of potential wildlife habitat for forest carnivores, spotted owl, and goshawk (located in the Golden Bear and Van Sickle areas); and approximately 1,000 feet of potential Willow Flycatcher habitat and 200 feet of potential Mountain Yellow Legged Frog habitat as it parallels Martin Avenue near Trout Creek. The trail corridor will not cross any mapped activity centers for spotted owl or goshawk.

The project would also result in changes in existing public access to and recreational uses of the project site, which would influence future patterns of disturbance on biological resources. The EIR/EIS/EIS will evaluate the potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects of trail construction and use on: 1) existing vegetation communities, wildlife habitats, and aquatic resources; 2) common and ecologically significant vegetation, wildlife, and aquatic resources; and 3) special-status plant, wildlife, and aquatic species, including TRPA Special Interest Species. The relationship of project effects to TRPA thresholds for vegetation, wildlife, and fisheries will also be evaluated.

**Earth Resources: Geology and Soils, and Land Capability and Coverage.** The project would involve excavation and possibly the placement of fill material for trail construction, boardwalks, bridges and neighborhood access trails. Potential environmental effects related to land capability and coverage, soils and geology, topographic alteration, seismic hazards, slope stability, and erosion potential will be described. If soil export outside of the study area is necessary, potential disposal sites will be identified and evaluated.

**Scenic Resources.** The trail construction would result in the changes to natural elements that contribute to the scenic quality of the study area (e.g., vegetation), as well as changes related to the installation of recreation-related structures (e.g., trails, boardwalks, viewing points). Visibility of these changes from U.S. 50 and Pioneer Trail, TRPA-designated scenic travel routes, will be determined. Potential impacts from construction of the trail will be evaluated from sensitive viewpoints in or near the study area. Scenic effects will be evaluated in terms of

visibility, alteration of the visual setting, sensitivity of viewpoints, and potential effects on TRPA scenic thresholds.

**Public Access and Recreation.** Construction and operation of the trail would result in changes in existing public access to and recreational uses of the study area. The study area is comprised of many existing informal trails, many of which are located in the Sunset Stables area located east of the Upper Truckee River and Lake Tahoe Airport. Many of these trails are located in the Upper Truckee River stream environment zone and 100-year floodplain. The proposed trail will bring more visitors to this sensitive area, so there is potential for increased use of and damage to the vegetation and soils in the Upper Truckee River stream zone. The EIR/EIS/EIS will evaluate the changes to existing recreation areas and uses, and ways to keep trail users on the formal trail and off of sensitive lands.

**Cultural Resources.** Much of the trail corridor is located on undeveloped land. the potential for cultural resources to be located on or near the trail alignment and the potential for disturbance of known and/or undiscovered cultural resources due to implementation of the Project will be analyzed. The evaluation methodology will include consultation with the Washoe Tribe and evaluation in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

**Transportation, Parking and Circulation.** Trail construction would generate short-term, construction-related traffic. Long-term traffic generated by the recreational components will also be discussed, but it is anticipated that trail use as an alternative to the use of the automobile will more than offset new trips from recreational users. The transportation analysis will include identification of major roadways and intersections that may be affected by the proposed trail construction, traffic volumes on those roadways, and potential neighborhood effects from parking on residential streets near the trail corridor.

**Air Quality.** Trail construction would involve emissions from construction equipment and employee trips, and the generation of fugitive dust, both contributing pollutants to the air basin. An assessment of short-term (i.e., construction) air quality impacts and long-term (i.e., operational) regional air pollutant emissions, including mobile, stationary, and area source emissions will be performed. It is anticipated that long-term benefits will occur from trail construction and its use as an alternative to the private automobile.

**Noise.** Potential short-term (i.e., construction) noise impacts, relative to sensitive receptors and their potential exposure will be assessed. Noise levels of specific construction equipment will be determined and resultant noise levels at nearby receptors (at given distances from the source) will be calculated.

**Public Services and Utilities.** The EIR/EIS/EIS will evaluate impacts on power, water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection, solid waste collection and disposal, police services, fire protection services, schools, and fire fuel management.

**Hazards and Hazardous Materials.** The EIR/EIS/EIS will assess whether potential hazardous materials may be located in the study area. It will also address hazardous materials issues related to adjoining properties.

**Agricultural and Mineral Resources.** The proposed alternatives are not expected to affect agricultural or mineral resources in the study area. Existing resources will be verified and discussed.

**Socioeconomics.** With the exception of recreation, discussed above, the proposed alternatives are not expected to significantly affect socioeconomic factors associated with the study area. Potential economic impacts related to population and housing, especially in adjacent residential neighborhoods will be considered.

**Growth Inducement.** The effects of the proposed trail on growth inducement will be addressed. However, the proposed trail is not expected to induce or result in the growth of population in the region, cause an increase in demand for employment opportunities, or cause an increase in other public needs.

**Cumulative Effects.** The EIR/EIS/EIS will identify and describe recently approved and reasonably anticipated projects in the South Lake Tahoe area and vicinity of the proposed trail (e.g., Sunset Stables Project), and region-wide planning efforts currently underway (e.g., Pathway 2007, the total maximum daily load [TMDL] requirement being developed for the Upper Truckee River). The EIR/EIS/EIS will evaluate the combined effects of these activities with related impacts of the proposed action.

**TRPA Threshold Carrying Capacities:** The EIR/EIS/EIS will include assessment of the proposed action's compliance with and contribution to the attainment of threshold carrying capacities adopted by TRPA.

## **INTENDED USES OF THE EIR/EIS/EIS**

The Conservancy, USFS, and TRPA will use this EIR/EIS/EIS to consider the environmental effects, mitigation measures, and alternatives, when considering the proposed action for approval. State responsible and trustee agencies and federal cooperating agencies may also use this EIR/EIS/EIS, as needed, for subsequent discretionary actions. Information provided in the EIR/EIS/EIS will also be used by agencies in their permitting process, including but not limited to, TRPA and City of South Lake Tahoe construction permits, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and 401 wetland certification permits, California Department of Fish and Game Streambed Alteration Agreements, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wetland permits.

## **ATTACHMENT A      DETAILED TRAIL MAPPING**